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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Judge, deliver the Members of this body from the pressures of daily duties, the tension of our times, and the confusion of many voices filled with certainty. Help our Senators to pause and reflect, enabling them to hear again Your "still, small voice" summoning them to profound thoughts and high endeavors. May they discipline themselves to follow truth wherever it leads, to stand for justice, even though they might stand alone; to champion the right, even when it appears unpopular. Give them courage to engage in an introspection that will strip their soul to its bare essence, leaving them only with the desire to do Your will.

With respect for other faiths, I pray in Jesus's Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD.)

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 17, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TESTER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY WHIP

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning after morning business, we will resume consideration of the Defense authorization bill. This is an annual bill that comes before us relating to the Department of Defense and the conduct of America's national defense. It is an important bill made more important this year because the focus of debate at this moment is on the war in Iraq.

We understand this is an issue that is on the minds of most Americans. We also understand that this is a body, the Senate, where we represent the people of this country. I believe the debate should be an open debate, one that gives opportunity for both points of view to be expressed. I also believe that at the end of the debate on the central issue of the war in Iraq, we should take a majority vote and decide what the Senate stands for when it comes to our policy.

Those who stand for the President's position can oppose the Levin-Reed amendment, which is pending and is going to be considered soon. It is an amendment which establishes a timetable for American troops to start coming home. It is a timetable for ending

this war responsibly, ending our combat role by the spring of next year. It is the only amendment pending which is specific and will change the policy and direction in Iraq.

Unfortunately, the procedural issues ahead of us are very complicated. The Senate Republican leader, Mr. McCONNELL of Kentucky, has insisted that instead of a majority vote on the war in Iraq, it will be necessary to have 60 votes. I think that is unfortunate.

Last year, during the course of debating the Defense authorization bill, there were two major amendments related to the war in Iraq. Both of those amendments were considered and held to a majority vote standard. Earlier this year, on the supplemental appropriations bill for the war in Iraq, another question came up about change in policy—again, a majority vote. But things have changed. Since that time, at least three Republican Senators have stepped forward and said they disagree with the President's policy and will vote to change the direction of this war. Because of that, it is clear we have a majority supporting this change in direction.

Now the Republican leader insists on 60 votes, insists on filibustering the amendment that is before the Senate. He is trying to stop the debate on whether we will change direction in Iraq. As a result, we are going to have an unusual session of this Senate which will commence shortly and run around the clock until tomorrow morning, when we will face a cloture vote. A cloture vote is an opportunity for Senators to step forward and say whether they truly want a change in the policy of this war. The Republican minority has insisted on this 60-vote threshold, knowing it is more difficult to reach, but we haven't given up. We believe that with the three Republican Senators who have already expressed their dissatisfaction with the President's policy, others may join. We know that Republican Senators back in their

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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